



Joseph Kraft

# The Anderson Papers

JACK ANDERSON achieved a journalistic coup in publishing the minutes of the secret White House meetings on the India-Pakistan crisis. But how much of a hero is the man who leaked the information?

My strong impression is that he accomplished very little public good, if any. On the contrary, his actions are almost certain to drive the Nixon administration deeper than ever into secret dealings on a restricted basis.

On the good side of the ledger, the leak has now provided unmistakable information that the President deliberately tilted American policy in favor of Pakistan and against India. But that much was known to everybody in touch with the State Department and White House at the time of the crisis.

Sens. Edmund Muskie, Edward Kennedy and Frank Church, among others, said so. Hundreds of us wrote it. Indeed, one reason Henry Kissinger held his background briefing of Dec. 7 was to take the edge off the charges the White House was biased in favor of Pakistan.

A second and more important gain from the revelation has to do with information about the way the government works. The secret minutes provide detailed, irrefutable evidence that day-to-day foreign policy is made in the White House as never before. They equally show that top officials allowed themselves to be treated as mere lackeys by the White House. Some of them—including such supposed heavyweights as the chief of naval operations—said, and apparently regularly say, things silly enough to issue from the mouth of Bertie Wooster.

Then there is the matter of truth-telling. According to the minutes released by Anderson, Henry Kissinger had a meeting of officials on Dec.

3 that "he (the President) wants to tilt in favor of Pakistan."

On Dec. 7, in a background session with reporters subsequently released by Sen. Barry Goldwater, Dr. Kissinger said: "There have been some

comments that the administration is anti-Indian. This is totally inaccurate."

Seen thus starkly, Dr. Kissinger told a flat lie. My impression is that, taken in the larger context, his remarks at the secret conference were not in such flagrant contradiction with his remarks at the background briefing. Still, he was plainly trying to manipulate public opinion.

BUT SO WHAT? Does the new evidence do more than confirm a universal judgment? After the U-2 and the Bay of Pigs and the credibility gap, is there anybody not impossibly naive or ill-informed who doesn't know that the government lies? Is one more bit of evidence a noble act? Or is it just a pebble added to the Alps?

Set against these gains, there is the way the administration is apt to react. Maybe the President and Dr. Kissinger are going to say to themselves: "Golly, we sure erred in not telling the truth and nothing but the truth. Jack Anderson has taught us that honesty is the best policy."

But much more likely, they are going to feel that the minutes of the meeting were legitimately classified internal working papers of the government. Probably they are going to feel that the stuff was leaked not for any large purpose, but out of opposition to the policy. And almost certainly—and I say this as an opponent of the policy—they will be right in this surmise.

In these circumstances, the limited trust they have in the outside world is going to be even more sharply limited. The government will have, of the bureaucracy—a

suspicion that the departments and agencies are full of crypto-Democrats out to get the administration—is only going to be intensified. And that deep suspicion is going to yield two sets of adverse reactions.

For one thing, security will be tightened. There is apt to be an end to the kind of minutes that were taken at Dr. Kissinger's meetings. They will certainly not be spread through the bureaucracy anymore.

Secondly, the limited access which experienced officials now have to White House decision-making is going to be even further curbed. The President and Dr. Kissinger are going to keep things to themselves more than ever. Important decisions which are even now made with too little consultation and with too small an input from the outside are going to be made by an even more narrowly circumscribed group of men.

No doubt Anderson gets high marks for his acumen and industry and courage as a journalist. But his source, the man who leaked the stuff, is something else. Whatever his motives, he has done this country a disservice.